

'Boots on the Ground' visit highlights K-Bay's efficiency

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MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII — Showcasing Marine Corps Base Hawaii's efforts to increase aviation efficiency and innovation, Wednesday's "Boots on the Ground" visit brought together high-ranking officers and junior service members.

It's part of a program under Naval Aviation Enterprise, a warfighting partnership of more than 40 naval aviation stakeholders, allowing senior officials a first-hand look at daily operations of several aviation units. It's also a chance for Marines and sailors, especially junior enlisted, to speak with leaders about their concerns.

"The work being done on base is impressive," said, Lt. Gen. George J. Trautman III, deputy commandant of aviation of the Marine Corps, who was among those visiting the base. "It's some of the best I've seen in the last three years."

The general was impressed with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24's programs that ensure aircraft are combat ready without wasting resources. The squadron uses NAE's philosophy of continuous process improvement or "AIRSpeed" to be efficient. The benefits of implementing these best business practices are wide-reaching, said Maj. Stephen Gentile, action officer for BoG 2010, MALS-24.

"Instantly, there's cost savings while improving readiness," Gentile said. "Reducing costs and waste helps us keep more aircraft up too. It's a win-win."

During the BoG visit, he and other MALS-24 personnel showed how they were able to achieve cost savings. Gentile noted one of the unique ways MALS-24 has taken efficiency to heart is accounting for how long it takes personnel to complete projects. His department determines a set goal time to complete projects, called "logistics response time."

If projects or orders are not finished by the LRT, the unit tracks how much longer it took to finish the project. This extra time, called "production delay time," is also recorded. The squadron started keeping track of this information since spring and is analyzing why delays may occur. Constantly striving to reduce work hours and improving worker quality of life is essential to the readiness of any squadron, said Capt. Mark Morgan, AIRSpeed officer, MALS-24.

"It's absolutely important," Morgan said. "There's millions and millions of dollars spent in aircraft support, and we need to be wise with the processes and how we manage the resources we have."

NAE officials toured several MALS-24 departments where they saw live demonstrations of how the base achieved better business practices. Among the first stops was at Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light 37's operations at Hangar 103. Personnel demonstrated the use of an innovative electronic portable barcode system to keep better track of how and when tools are used. This reduces the time it takes to find tools and cuts down on replacement of lost items. The Aviation Life Support Systems and Ordnance Departments showed how they've cut down on waste, including how the Ordnance department is shredding waste materials and trimming down work hours.

Both Trautman and Rear Adm. Tim Matthews, commander, Fleet Readiness Centers, said they've learned a lot from the MCB Hawaii's presentations during the BoG tour. "The leadership here, from the officers down to enlisted personnel, have taken aviation readiness as an investment," Trautman said.

He and Matthews said the BoG visit is also an opportunity for them to directly help MCB Hawaii staff with aircraft readiness challenges that may have been brought up during their time here. Representatives will take action items back to their commands for further review and possible resolution.

Wednesday was the second time MCB Hawaii has supported a BoG visit from senior leaders. In 2006, the base was one of the first test sites for the BoG tours.

Matthews said his visit to MCB Hawaii was to offer his help breaking barriers for readiness and also to find better business practices that could also help other units.

"I've been impressed by sailors and Marines who are briefing us on process improvements they have come up with themselves," he said. "It's very encouraging, and it's what NAE is trying to do. It's trying to get the folks closest to a problem to come up with innovative solutions."

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